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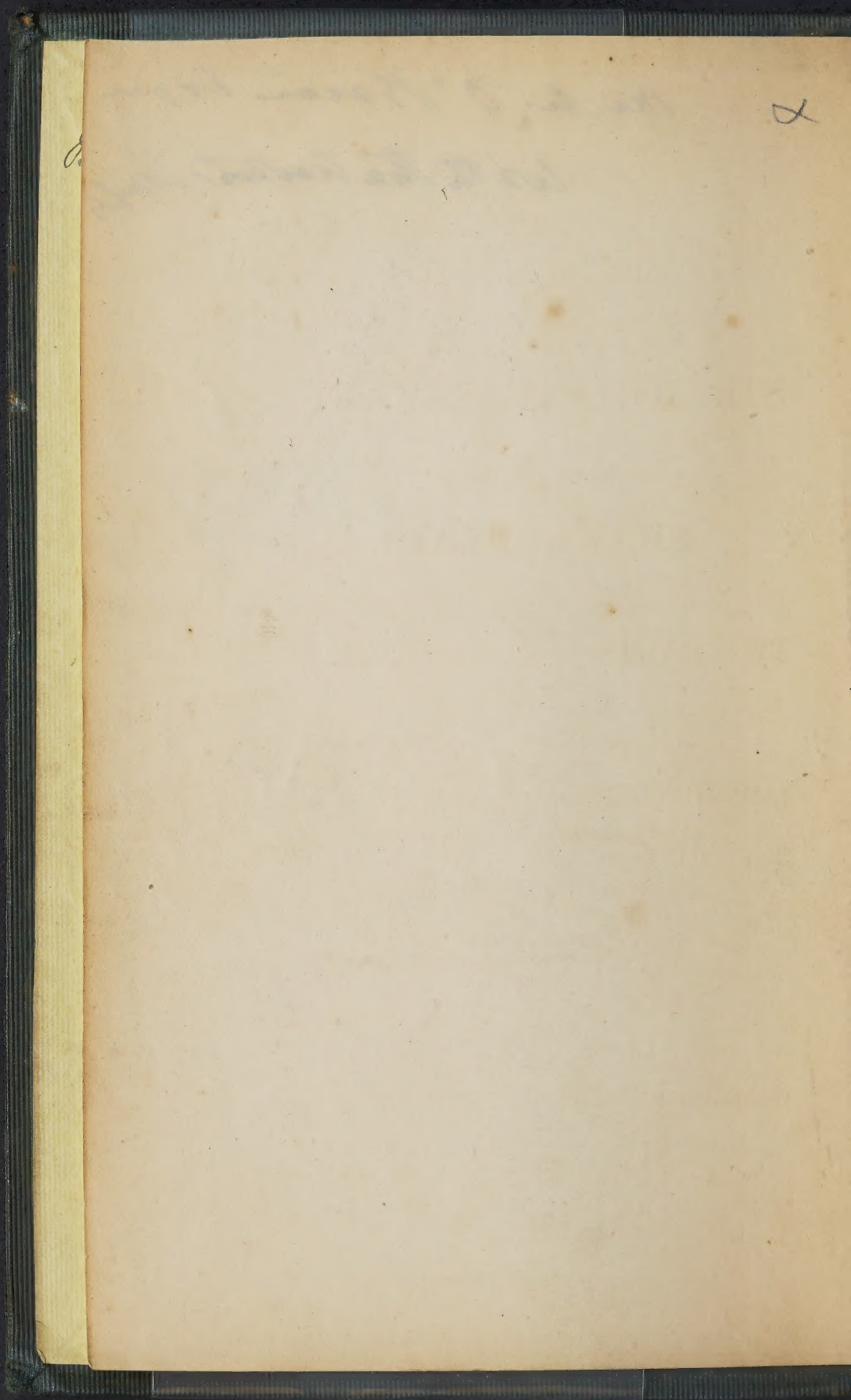
HALLIWELL
ON
SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.

J. P. G. 1897.

J. P. Gatenby.

Mich. O'Brien Esq

with the Auston's Comps



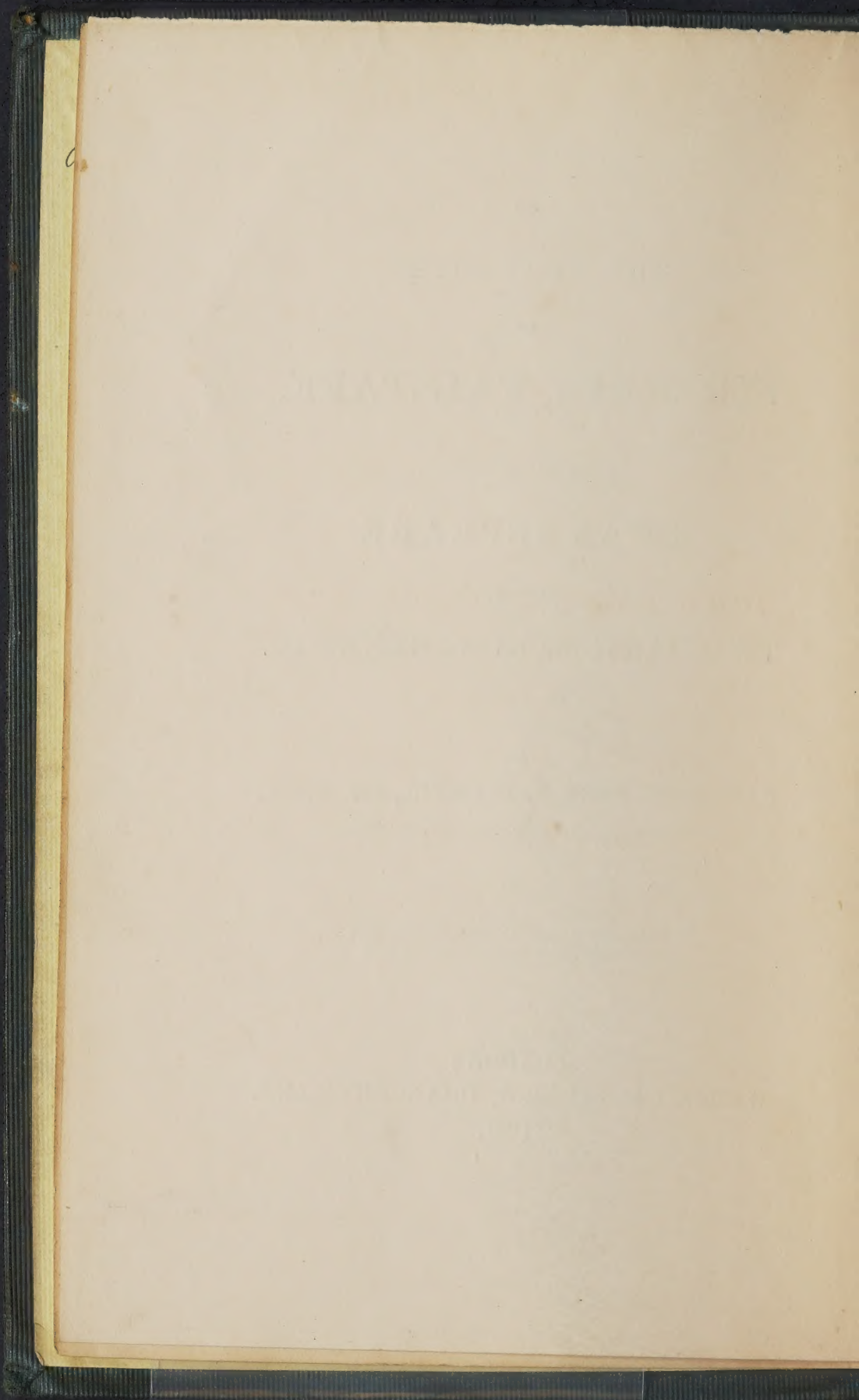
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ON
THE CHARACTER
OF
SIR JOHN FALSTAFF,
AS ORIGINALLY EXHIBITED BY
SHAKESPEARE
IN THE
TWO PARTS OF KING HENRY IV.

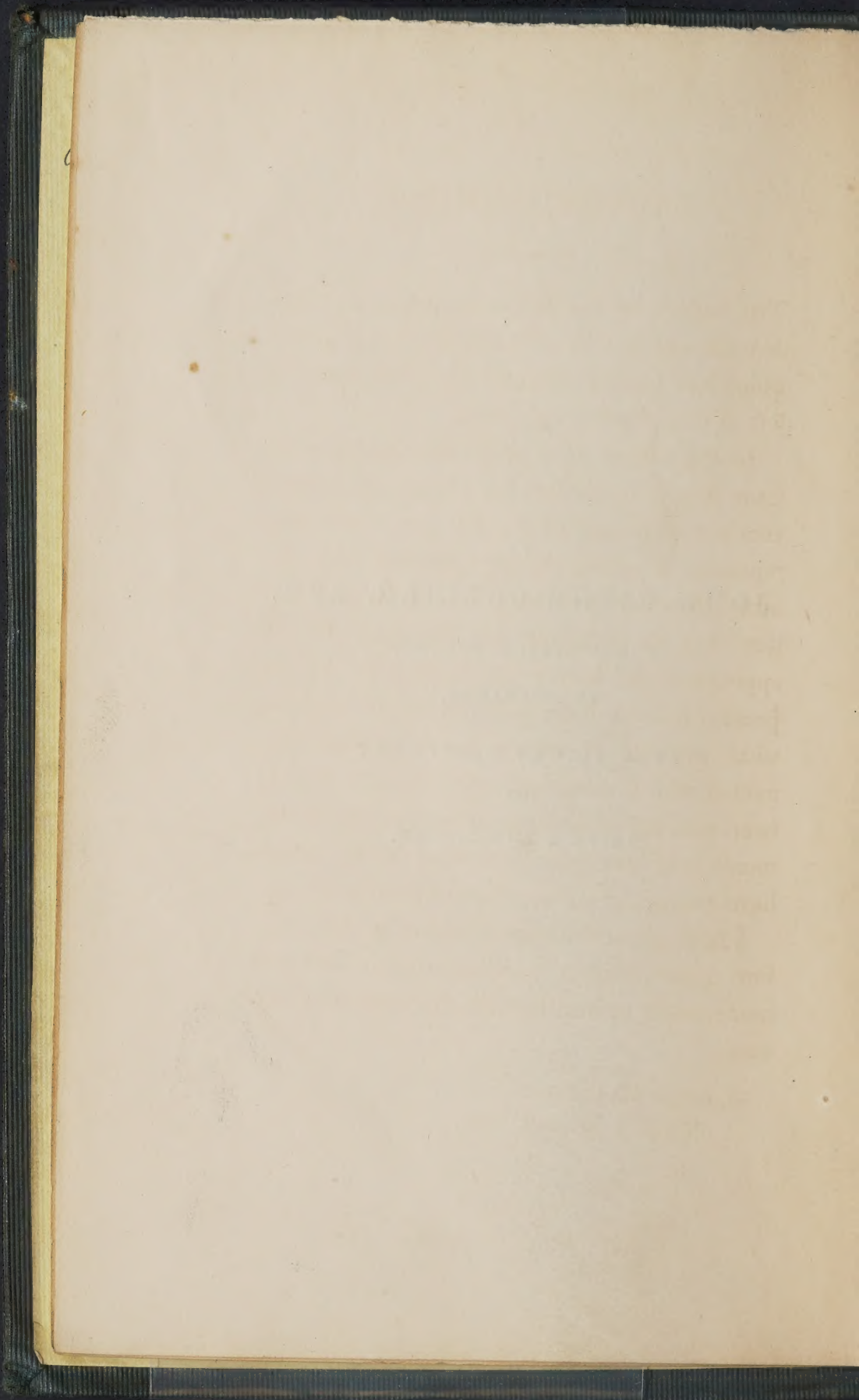
BY
JAMES ORCHARD HALLIWELL, Esq., F.R.S.,
HON. M.R.I.A., F.S.A., F.R.A.S., ETC. ETC. ETC.

“ In spite of faction this would favour get ;
But Falstaff stands inimitable yet.”

LONDON :
WILLIAM PICKERING, CHANCERY LANE.
1841.



TO
JOHN PAYNE COLLIER, ESQ.,
THIS LITTLE VOLUME
IS INSCRIBED,
AS A SLIGHT TESTIMONY
OF
RESPECT AND ESTEEM.



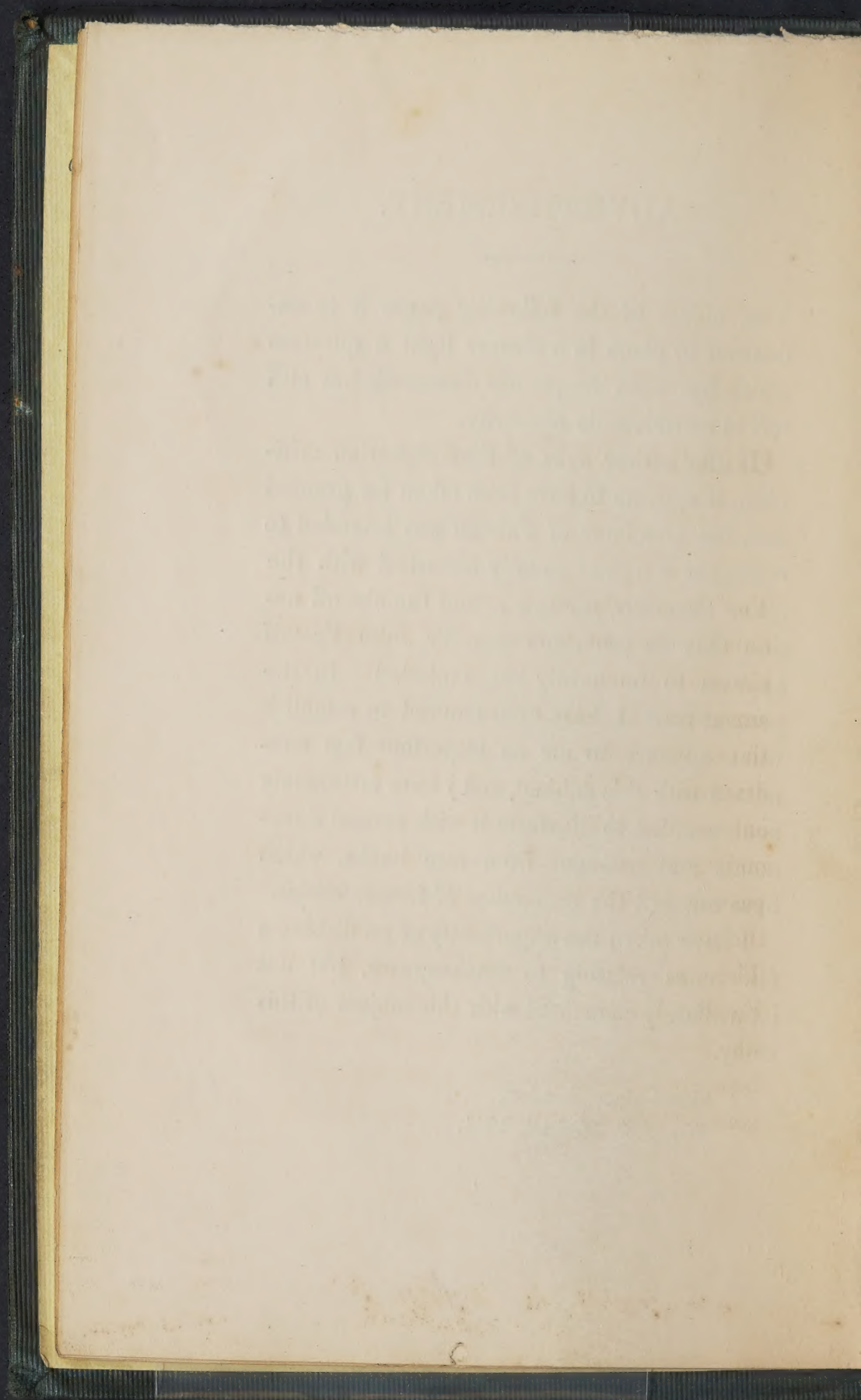
ADVERTISEMENT.

THE object of the following pages is to endeavour to place in a clearer light a question which has been frequently discussed, but still left in considerable obscurity.

In the earlier ages of Shakespearian criticism, it appears to have been taken for granted that the character of Falstaff was intended to represent a person equally historical with the other *dramatis personæ* ; and the absurd notion that its prototype was Sir John Fastolf appears to be hardly yet exploded. In the present tract I have endeavoured to establish what appears to me an important fact connected with this subject, and I have fortunately been enabled to illustrate it with several documents and passages from rare books, which have escaped the researches of former critics.

I have taken the opportunity of publishing a few notes relating to Shakespeare, but not immediately connected with the subject of this essay.

35, Alfred-place, London,
Eve of St. Michael, 1841.



AN ESSAY

ON THE

CHARACTER OF FALSTAFF.

THE two parts of Henry IV. are unquestionably the most original of Shakespeare's historical dramas; or, in other words, to avoid ambiguity, he was not so deeply indebted in those two plays to the labours of previous dramatists. We recognize in them the forms only of the old compositions; and they have undergone so complete a transformation, in passing through his hands, that little else than the title and general character can be traced. These still remain in an old play entitled "The Famous Victories of King Henry the Fifth," which has been satisfactorily proved to have been written before the year 1588. The connexion which exists between a character in

that production, Sir John Oldcastle, and Shakespeare's ever famous fat knight, is a subject to which I wish to draw the attention of critical readers of our great dramatist, in the following pages. I propose to discuss, and I hope I shall be able satisfactorily to set at rest, a question which has arisen, grounded hitherto on a tradition of no earlier date than the commencement of the eighteenth century,* whether Shakespeare in the first instance borrowed the name as well as amplified the character of the above-mentioned nobleman, who is so highly distinguished in the history of the reformed religion.

This question does not in any way affect the fame of Shakespeare. It may be good

* I allude, of course, to the well-known tradition handed down to us by Rowe, in his "Life of Shakespeare :"—"It may not be improper to observe that this part of Falstaff is said to have been written originally under the name of Oldcastle ; some of that family being then remaining, the Queen was pleased to command him to alter it ; upon which he made use of Falstaff."

policy to premise this, for I observe with regret that there are many readers of our immortal poet's works, who, without a knowledge of the subject, despise the literature and criticism which have set the emanations of his genius in their true historical light, and who are also greatly averse to the idea of accusing Shakespeare of being indebted to previous writers for any portion of the material on which he has founded his dramas. I am now alluding to the πολλοι, and not to those who, with a competent knowledge of contemporary literature, have made it a matter of study. Among the numerous readers of Shakespeare, with whom I have had the fortune to converse, I have never yet found one who did not consider him, in the words of an author who ought to have known better, as "the great poet whom nature framed to disregard the wretched models that were set before him, and to create a drama from his own native and original stores." The real fact is, that no dramatist ever made a freer use of those "wretched models" than Shakespeare. It may safely be

said that not a single plot of any of his dramas is entirely his own. It is true that the sources of some of his plays have not yet been discovered, but they are those that we know he would not have invented, leaving the capability of doing so out of the question. There can, at any rate, be no doubt that all the historical plays which are ascribed to Shakespeare were on the stage before his time, and that he was employed by the managers to remodel and repair them, taking due care to retain the names of the characters, and preserve the most popular incidents. In the two parts of Henry IV., as I have observed above, he has so completely repaired the old model, that they may almost be considered in the light of original dramas.

I can scarcely imagine a more interesting subject for literary enquiry than the tracing out the originals of these plays, and the examination of the particular *loci* where the master hand of Shakespeare has commenced his own labours; yet it is a study so inadequately encouraged, and so little valued, that few have

the courage to enlist in its cause. The public appear to consider it an obstacle, rather than otherwise, to the free reading of his works, and wonder more especially what possible connexion there can be between literary history and romantic dramas. It was but recently that one of our most learned and acute critics in this way was pronounced a perfect barbarian — a savage without a poetical soul, because he fixed by historic wand the scene of Prospero's enchantments. The master stroke of the photogenic art was thought unfavourable to the interests of true poetry, and a "local habitation and a name" incompatible with the nature of the theme. Surely, in common fairness, the "still-vex'd Bermoothes" ought to be expunged, and all the earthly concomitants deposited, like Lampedusa, in ethereal uncertainty.

But do we, as Mr. Hunter asks, by researches such as these, lose any particle of the admiration in which we hold Shakespeare? If the positive be maintained, there is at least a satisfaction in knowing what is the real fact; and there is a love of truth, as well as a love of

Shakespeare, and a homage due to both. A careful historian would pause, no matter how strong the evidence was, before he would attribute to any genius, however vast, the mighty revolutions in poetry or science which are vulgarly ascribed to Shakespeare. The labours of successive, or more rarely, combined minds, alone are able to accomplish such things. When Pope said—

“Nature and Nature’s laws lay hid in night :
God said, ‘ Let Newton be,’ and all was light !”

he expressed himself very eloquently; and the opinion implied in the couplet has become a popular dogma. But Newton owed as much to Kepler as Shakespeare did to Marlowe; and Coleridge could not have been far wrong when he extended the weight of those obligations even beyond the boundary usually adopted by professed critics. In plain words, Shakespeare did not invent—he perfected a drama already ennobled by the labours of others; and the history of that drama forms a very curious and important epoch in our vernacular literature.

Plays were ascribed to Plautus, if we may believe Aulus Gellius, which he only retouched and polished. They were, to use his own expression, *retractatæ et expolitæ*. It was so also with Shakespeare; but few now would be guilty of ascribing that "drum and trumpet" thing, called the "First Part of Henry VI.," to his pen, written doubtlessly before he entered the arena of dramatic competition, though it may have been afterwards slightly revised by him. I can see little evidence or reason for including it in his works, but as it is often inserted as a genuine play, I will take it as a document in the history of his historical dramas, rather than consider it to have any necessary connexion with them. To tax Shakespeare with the character of *Fastolf*, as exhibited in that play, is an absolute libel on his genius. Who, indeed, can reasonably accuse him of introducing the same character in Henry VI., whose death he had described in Henry V. in a manner so remarkable? There is not, in fact, any ground for believing that the charac-

ters of *Fastolf* and *Falstaff* have any connexion whatever with each other. I much doubt whether Shakespeare even had the former in his memory, when he changed the name, as I shall afterwards show, of Oldcastle to Falstaff; and I think it extremely probable that the latter name might have been inserted merely for the purpose of marking one of the principal traits in his character.

Yet we find historians and journalists constantly giving countenance to this vulgar error, and Fastolf is mentioned as the prototype of Falstaff with as much positiveness as though he were an actual original of a genuine historical character. Mr. Beltz, in his recent work on the Order of the Garter, and a reviewer of that book in a literary journal of high pretensions, have fallen into the same error. The point is of importance, because it affects a good deal of our reasoning on the sources of Shakespeare's most celebrated historical plays; and we are surprised to find so many writers of reputation giving their authority to the common mistake.

This leads us to old Fuller,* who was one of the earliest delinquents. In speaking of Sir John Fastolf, he says:—

“To avouch him by many arguments valiant, is to maintain that the sun is bright, though since the stage hath been overbold with his memory, making him a *thrasonical puff*, and emblem of mock valour.

“True it is, Sir John Oldcastle did first bear the brunt of the one, being made the make-sport in all plays for a coward. It is easily known out of what purse this black peny came; the Papists railing on him for a heretick, and therefore he must also be a coward, though indeed he was a man of arms, every inch of him, and as valiant as any in his age.

“Now as I am glad that Sir John Oldcastle is put out, so I am sorry that Sir John Fastolfe is put in, to relieve his memory in this base ser-

* “Worthies of England,” Edit. 1811, vol. ii., p. 131-2. Fuller died in 1661, and this work was published for the first time soon afterwards. This enables us to fix a limit to the date of the passage about to be quoted.

vice, to be the anvil for every dull wit to strike upon. Nor is our comedian excusable by some alteration of his name, writing him Sir John Falstafe, and making him the property of pleasure for King Henry the Fifth to abuse, seeing the vicinity of sounds intrench on the memory of that worthy knight—and few do heed the inconsiderable difference in spelling of their name.”

This extract from Fuller, a very credible writer, will of itself go a considerable way towards establishing the truth of Rowe’s tradition; but I have other and more important documents to introduce to the notice of my readers, by means of which I hope to be enabled to prove—

1. That the stage was in the possession of a rude outline of Falstaff before Shakespeare wrote either part of Henry IV., under the name of Sir John Oldcastle.

2. That the name of Oldcastle was retained for a time in Shakespeare’s Henry IV., but changed to Falstaff before the play was printed.

3. That, in all probability, some of the

theatres, in acting Henry IV., retained the name of Oldcastle after the author had made the alteration.

4. That Shakespeare probably made the change before the year 1593.

I must leave the consideration of the first of these propositions until I have examined the second, because in this case the similarity consists rather in the adoption of the same *dramatis personæ* and subject by Shakespeare and his predecessors, than in the manner in which they are treated. My first witness for the truth of the second problem, which, with the others, I hope to transform into theorems, is one whose veracity is unimpeachable, because he could have had no possible object in publishing an untruth—I mean Dr. Richard James, librarian to Sir Robert Cotton, a contemporary of Shakespeare, and an intimate friend of “rare” Ben Jonson. He may thus, through the latter dramatist, have had access to the very best sources of information for the account which he gives in the following dedicatory epistle prefixed to his work entitled

“The Legend and Defence of the Noble Knight and Martyr, Sir John Oldcastel,” never published, but preserved with his other manuscripts in the Bodleian Library,* and which undoubtedly is a most valuable independent testimony in favour of the truth of Rowe’s tradition:—

“*To my noble friend Sir Henrye Bouchier.*”

“Sir Harrie Bouchier, you are descended of Noble Auncestrie, and in the dutie of a good man loue to heare and see faire reputation pre-served from slander and oblivion. Wherefore to you I dedicate this edition of Ocleve, where Sir Jhon Oldcastell apeeres to haue binne a man of valour and vertue, and onely lost in

* MS. James, 34. See Bernard’s “Catalogus Librorum Manuscriptorum Angliæ et Hiberniæ,” fol. Oxon. 1697, par. 1, p. 263. I am indebted for my knowledge of this very important document to the Rev. Dr. Bliss, whose liberality in communicating the results of his extensive reading, when he can aid the researches of others, has benefited so many. I beg leave to return my grateful and respectful acknowledgments.

his owne times because he would not bowe vnder the foule superstition of Papistrie, from whence in so great light of Gosple and learning that there is not yet a more vniversall departure is to me the greatest scorne of men. But of this more in another place, and in preface will you please to heare me that which followes. A young Gentle Ladie of your acquaintance, having read the works of Shakespeare, made me this question: How Sir John Falstaffe, or Fastolf as it is written in the statute book of Maudlin Colledge in Oxford, where everye daye that societie were bound to make memorie of his soule, could be dead in Harrie the Fifts time and againe liue in the time of Harrie the Sixt to be banisht for cowardize? Whereto I made answeare that this was one of those humours and mistakes for which Plato banisht all Poets out of his commonwealth, that Sir Jhon Falstaffe was in those times a noble valiant souldier as apeeres by a book in the Herald's office dedicated vnto him by a herald whoe had binne with him if I well remember for the space of 25 yeeres in the French wars; that he seemes allso to haue

binne a man of learning because in a librarie of Oxford I finde a book of dedicating churches sent from him for a present vnto Bishop Wainflete and inscribed with his owne hand. That in Shakespeare's first shewe of Harrie the Fifth, the person with which he undertook to playe a buffone was not Falstaffe, but Sir Jhon Oldcastle, and that offence beinge worthily taken by personages descended from his title, as peradventure by manie others allso whoe ought to haue him in honourable memorie, the poet was putt to make an ignorant shifte of abusing Sir John Falstophe, a man not inferior of virtue though not so famous in pietie as the other, who gaue witnesse vnto the trust of our reformation with a constant and resolute martyrdom, vnto which he was pursued by the Priests, Bishops, Moncks, and Friers of those dayes. Noble sir, this is all my preface. God keepe you, and me, and all Christian people from the bloodie designs of that cruell religion.

“Yours in all observance;

“RICH.: JAMES.”

With respect to this important letter, it will be observed that, by the "first shewe of Harrie the Fifth," James unquestionably means Shakespeare's Henry IV. He could not have confused Shakespeare's play with "The Famous Victories," for in the latter drama the *nomen* of the character of Oldcastle had not been altered. The "young gentle ladie" had read the *works* of Shakespeare, most probably the folio edition, and it is not at all likely she would have alluded to a play which had then been entirely superseded. James and his lady friend also confuse the characters of Fastolf and Falstaff, another example of the unfortunate circumstance of the poet choosing a name so similar to that of the real hero.

Dr. James died at the close of the year 1638, and consequently the work, from which I have quoted the letter given above, must have been composed either in Shakespeare's life-time, or shortly after his death. On a careful comparison of the handwriting with other of his papers which are dated, I came to the conclusion that 1625 was the year in which the

manuscript was written. This, however, must not by any means be considered conclusive; but a few years either way are not of great consequence. I have not succeeded in discovering the date of Bouchier's death, the person to whom the dedicatory epistle is addressed, or I might perhaps have been enabled to compress the uncertain date within even narrower limits.

I have said that Dr. James, whom Wood calls "a humorous person," was intimate with Ben Jonson. I derive my knowledge of this fact from the papers of the former in the Bodleian Library, but I was disappointed in my expectation of finding notices of other dramatists. Jonson is frequently spoken of in high terms, and in one letter particularly he receives the greatest compliment from James that one scholar could pay to another:—"Jam patres illi libenter spectarent ingenium fœcundissimi Benjamini Jonsoni, quem, ut Thuanus de Petro Ronsardo, censeo cum omni antiquitate comparandum, si compta et plena sensibus poemata ejus et scenica spectemus." When

Jonson's "Staple of News" was produced in 1625, the Doctor addressed him poetically in the following lines, which are here given from the same collection of manuscripts:—

*"To Mr. Benj. Jhonson, on his Staple of Niewes
first presented.*

"Sir, if my robe and garbe were richly worth
The daringe of a statute comming forth,
Were I or man of law or law maker,
Or man of Courte to be an vndertaker,
For judgment would I then comme in and say
The manye honours of your *staple* play :
But being nothing so, I dare not haile
The mightie floates of ignorance, who saile
With winde and tide—their Sires, as stories tell,
In our eighth Harrie's time crownd Skelton's Nell,
And the foule Boss of Whittington with greene
Bayes, which on living tronkes are rarelye seene,
Soone sprung, soone fading, but deserving verse,
Must take more lasting glorie from the herse ;
When vulgars loose their sight, and sacred peeres
Of poetrie conspire to make your yeeres
Of memorie eternall, then you shal be read
By all our race of Thespians, board and bed,

And bancke and boure, vallie and mountaine will
 Rejoice to knowe somme pieces of your skill !
 Your rich Mosaique workes, inled by arte
 And curious industrie with everie parte
 And choice of all the Auncients, so I write,
 Though for your sake I dare not say and fighte."

This brief digression from our immediate argument is not without its use, because it satisfactorily shows that Dr. James was acquainted with one of the leading men in the drama of the time, and of course renders his testimony on such a subject of more than ordinary value. I will now proceed to give other, though less important, authorities for the truth of my second proposition ; and joined with those already placed before the reader's notice, they will be found, I think, sufficient to place that conclusion beyond a doubt

My first extract is from a tract entitled "The Meeting of Gallants at an Ordinarie, or the Walkes in Powles," 4to. Lond. 1604. The only known copy of this work is in Malone's collection in the Bodleian Library, but it will shortly be reprinted by the Percy Society, with

the addition of notes and introduction. Some gallants are “entering into the ordinarie,” when the following dialogue takes place between one of them and the “fatte hoste”:—

“*Host.* What, Gallants, are you come? are you come? welcome, Gentlemen; I haue newes enough for ye all; welcome againe, and againe: I am so fatte and pursie, I cannot speake loude inough, but I am sure you heare mee, or you shall heare me: Welcome, welcome, Gentlemen! I haue Tales, and Quailes for you; seate yourselues, Gallantes; enter, Boyes and Beardes, with dishes and Platters; I will be with you againe in a trice ere you looke for me.

“*Sig. Shuttlecocke.* Now, Signiors, how like you mine Host? did I not tell you he was a madde round knaue, and a merrie one too: and if you chaunce to talke of fatte Sir Iohn Old-castle, he wil tell you he was his great Grandfather, and not much vnlike him in Paunch, if you marke him well by all descriptions; and see where hee appeares againe. Hee told you he would not be longe from you;

let this humor haue scope enough, I pray, and there is no doubt but his Tales will make vs laugh ere we be out of our Porridge."

This merely shows that Sir John Oldcastle had been represented somewhere or other as a fat man, but I know of no existing account of any such representation, unless the supposition of the identity between Falstaff and Oldcastle be correct. My next extract is to the same effect, and is taken from a pamphlet entitled "The Wandering Jew telling Fortunes to Englishmen," 4to. Lond. 1640, p. 38, which was certainly written before the year 1630.* The character Glutton is speaking:—

"A chaire, a chaire, sweet master Jew, a chaire. All that I say is this,—I'me a fat man. It has been a West-Indian voyage for me to come reeking hither. A kitchin-stuffe wench might pick up a living by following me

* This appears from internal evidence. The plan and the names of the characters in this work appear to have been borrowed from a well-known tract called "The Man in the Moone telling Strange Fortunes, or the English Fortune-teller," 4to. Lond. 1609.

for the fat which I loose in stradling. I doe not live by the sweat of my brows, but am almost dead with sweating. I eate much, but can talke little. Sir John Oldcastle was my great-grandfather's father's uncle,—I come of a huge kindred ! And of you desire to learne whether my fortune be to die a yeere or two hence, or to grow bigger, if I continue as I doe in feeding, for my victuals I cannot leave. Say, say, mercifull Jew, what shall become of me ?”

Again I have recourse to Fuller, who, in another work,* repeats what he said before, but asserting more distinctly that the character of Falstaff was *substituted* for that of Oldcastle:

“Stage poets have themselves been very bold with, and others very merry at, the memory of Sir John Oldcastle, whom they have

* “Church History of Britain,” edit. 1655, p. 168. Oldys, in his MS. notes to Langbaine, says, in a marginal note, “If Falstaff appears in this first part, then he could not be substituted for Oldcastle.” He afterwards thought better of it, and has added, in a later hand, “Yes, he might.”

fancied a boon companion, a jovial royster, and yet a coward to boot, contrary to the credit of all chronicles, owning him a martial man of merit. The best is Sir John Falstaffe hath relieved the memory of Sir John Oldcastle, and of late is substituted buffoone in his place, but it matters as little what petulant poets as what malicious Papists have written against him."

In "Amends for Ladies," 4to. Lond. 1639, a play by Nathaniel Field, which, according to Mr. Collier, could not have been written before 1611, Falstaff's description of honour is mentioned by a citizen of London as if it had been delivered by Sir John Oldcastle :—

———" I doe heare
Your Lordship this faire morning is to fight,
And for your honor. Did you never see
The play wheere the fat knight, hight Oldcastle,
Did tell you truely what this honor was ?"

This single passage will alone render my third proposition highly probable, viz., that some of the theatres, in acting Henry IV.,

retained the name of Oldcastle after the author had altered it to that of Falstaff.

Early in the year 1600* appeared "The first part of the true and honorable history of the life of Sir John Oldcastle, the good Lord Cobham, as it hath bene lately acted by the Right Honorable the Earle of Notingham, Lord High Admiral of England, his servants. Written by William Shakespeare," 4to. Lond. The name of the author is supposititious, and now it is a matter of wonder how so glaring an imposition could have been suffered to pass unpunished, and even unnoticed. Such works were then of much less moment than they are now. Bodley, who was then forming his collection, classes plays under the head of "riffe raffes," and declares "they shall never come into mie librarie." It is possible, however, that Shakespeare may have edited this play, but,

* On Thursday, March 6th, 1599-1600, the Lord Chamberlain's players acted the play of Sir John Oldcastle before Vereiken, the Austrian ambassador, "to his great contentment." See the "Sidney State Letters," by Collins, vol. ii. p. 175.

if he allowed his name to be put on the title-page, it shows a carelessness for his own reputation, of which there are but too many instances. The speech of Lord Cobham (Sir John Oldcastle) to the King, at p. 27, may confirm my conjecture:—

“My gracious Lord, unto your Majesty,
 Next unto my God, I owe my life;
 And what is mine, either by nature's gift,
 Or fortune's bounty, all is at your service.
 But for obedience to the Pope of Rome,
 I owe him none; nor shall his shaveling priests
 That are in England, alter my belief.
 If out of Holy Scripture they can prove
 That I am in an error, I will yield,
 And gladly take instruction at their hands:
 But otherwise, I do beseech your Grace
 My conscience may not be encroach'd upon.”

These, I think, are the only lines in the whole play which could with any probability be ascribed to Shakespeare, and even they possess but slender claims. The prologue contains an argument for two of the propositions I have

been endeavouring to establish. It is as follows:—

“The doubtfull title (Gentlemen) prefixt
Vpon the Argument we haue in hand,
May breed suspence, and wrongfully disturbe
The peacefull quiet of your settled thoughts :
To stop which scruple, let this breefe suffice.
It is no pamper’d Glutton we present,
Nor aged Councillour to youthfull sinne :
But one, whose vertue shone aboue the rest,
A valiant Martyr, and a vertuous Peere,
In whose true faith and loyalty exprest
Vnto his Soueraigne, and his Countries weale :
We striue to pay that tribute of our loue
Your fauours merit: Let faire Truth be grac’d,
Since forg’d inuention former time defac’d.”

If we now turn to the following scene in the same play, we shall find that the change in the name of Shakespeare’s knight must have been made about the same time. The King in disguise has just met with Sir John, the thieving parson of Wrotham, when this dialogue takes place:—

“*Priest.* Stand, true man, says a thief.

King. Stand, thief, says a true man. How, if a thief?

Priest. Stand, thief, too.

King. Then, thief or true man, I must stand, I see. Howsoever the world wags, the trade of thieving yet will never down. What art thou?

Priest. A good fellow.

King. So am I too; I see thou dost know me.

Priest. If thou be a good fellow, play the good fellow's part. Deliver thy purse without more ado.

King. I have no money.

Priest. I must make you find some before we part. If you have no money, you shall have ware, as many sound blows as your skin can carry.

King. Is that the plain truth?

Priest. Sirrah, no more ado. Come, come, give me the money you have. Dispatch, I cannot stand all day.

King. Well, if thou wilt needs have it, there it is. Just the proverb, one thief robs

another. Where the devil are all my old thieves? Falstaffe, that villaine is so fat, he cannot get on's horse; but methinks Poins and Peto should be stirring hereabouts.

Priest. How much is there on't, of thy word?

King. A hundred pound in angels, on my word. The time has been I would have done as much for thee, if thou hadst past this way, as I have now.

Priest. Sirrah, what art thou? Thou seemst a gentleman.

King. I am no less; yet a poor one now, for thou hast all my money.

Priest. From whence camst thou?

King. From the court at Eltham.

Priest. Art thou one of the King's servants?

King. Yes, that I am, and one of his chamber.

Priest. I am glad thou'rt no worse. Thou may'st the better spare thy money; and think thou mightst get a poor thief his pardon, if he should have need?

King. Yes, that I can.

Priest. Wilt thou do so much for me, when I shall have occasion?

King. Yes, faith, will I, so it be for no murder.

Priest. Nay, I am a pitiful thief. All the hurt I do a man, I take but his purse. I'll kill no man.

King. Then of my word I'll do it.

Priest. Give me thy hand of the same.

King. There 'tis.

Priest. Methinks the King should be good to thieves, because he has been a thief himself, although I think now he be turn'd a true man.

King. Faith, I have heard he has had an ill name that way in's youth; but how canst thou tell that he has been a thief?

Priest. How? Because he once robb'd me before I fell to the trade myself, when that villanous guts that led him to all that roguery was in's company there, that Falstaff."

I next consider the internal evidence in Shakespeare's plays themselves that Oldcastle once supplied the place of Falstaff. Every one will remember the rout of Falstaff and his companions by the Prince and Poins, near Gadshill, when Henry triumphantly exclaims—

“Got with much ease. Now merrily to horse :
 The thieves are scatter’d, and possess’d with fear
 So strongly, that they dare not meet each other ;
 Each takes his fellow for an officer.

Away, good Ned ; Falstaff sweats to death,
 And lards the lean earth as he walks along :
 Wer’t not for laughing, I should pity him.”

It will be seen that in the fifth line a foot is actually deficient, and *Oldcastle*, instead of *Falstaff*, would perfectly complete the metre. It is true that some other explanation might be offered, perhaps equally plausible ; but it is at any rate a singular coincidence that in the very first place where the name Falstaff occurs in the text, an additional syllable should be required.

In the second scene of the first act, Falstaff asks the Prince, “Is not my hostess of the tavern a most sweet wench ?” Prince Henry answers, “As the honey of Hybla, my *old* lad of the castle.” I consider this to be a pun, in the original play as first written, on the name of *Sir John Oldcastle*. The commentators say this passage was transferred from the old play ; but,

as Master Ford observes, "I cannot put off my opinion so easily." I am confirmed in my conjecture by a passage in the play of Sir John Oldcastle, where there is a similar play upon words :—

"There's one, they call him Sir John Oldcastle.
He has not his name for nought ; for like a castle
Doth he encompass them within his walls.
But till that castle be subverted quite,
We ne'er shall be at quiet in the realm."

I now beg to call the reader's particular attention to a passage in Part 2, Act iii., Sc. 2, which affords undeniable proof that the name of Oldcastle once occupied the place which Falstaff now holds. Shallow is recalling reminiscences of his younger days, and he brings Falstaff in among other wild companions :—
"Then was Jack Falstaff, now Sir John, a boy,
and *page to Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk.*" It was Sir John Oldcastle, and not Falstaff, who was page to that nobleman. Shakespeare could not have fallen into an error by following the older play, because the cir-

cumstance is not there mentioned ; and it would be arming oneself against the force of evidence, which already is so overpowering on the opposite side, to class this among Shakespeare's historical blunders. I do not consider it necessary in this place to multiply references to the old chroniclers, in support of my assertion, that the historical fact, to which Shakespeare alludes in this passage, applies to Oldcastle, and not to Falstaff. One will be sufficient, and I have selected the following extract from Weever's poetical Life of Oldcastle, 12mo. Lond. 1601, where he is introduced speaking in his own person :—

“ Within the spring-tide of my flowring youth,
 He [his father] stept into the winter of his age ;
 Made meanes (Mercurius thus begins the truth)
 That I was made Sir Thomas Mowbrais page.”

Perhaps, however, the conclusion of the epilogue to the two plays furnishes us with the most decisive evidence that Shakespeare had delineated a character under the name of Oldcastle which had given offence, confirming the

tradition handed down to us by Rowe, and the relation which Dr. James gives:—

“One word more, I beseech you. If you be not too much cloyed with fat meat, our humble author will continue the story with Sir John in it, and make you merry with fair Katharine of France: where, for anything I know, Falstaff shall die of a sweat, unless already he be killed with your hard opinions; for Oldcastle died a martyr, and this is not the man.”

It is unnecessary to pursue this subject further. The other notices I have collected are mere repetitions of what are given above,* and add little weight to the general evidence. I have now only my fourth position to defend, for I shall pass over my first proposition, as a point already decided, with a reference to Mr. Collier's work on the English stage, who gives it as his opinion that Shakespeare was indebted for the “bare hint” of the delightful creation of

* Heylen, as quoted by Farmer, says, “This Sir John Fastolfe was, without doubt, a valiant and wise captain, notwithstanding the stage hath made merry with him.”—See *Boswell's Malone*, vol. xviii., p. 16.

Falstaff to the old play of "The Famous Victories," and nothing more.

There must of course be great uncertainty in fixing the precise date when Shakespeare made the alteration in the name of the character of his fat knight; and my conjecture on this point depends entirely upon an opinion which I have formed, and shall hereafter publish, on the date of the composition of another play—the "Merry Wives of Windsor." It would be unfair, then, of course, to place my view of the subject in any other light than that of conjecture formed upon premises, the probability of which must at present be taken upon my own authority. I believe the first sketch of the "Merry Wives" to have been written in the year 1593, and the name of Oldcastle must have been changed to Falstaff before that sketch was written. Everything tends to prove this. For instance, the first metrical piece which occurs in it could not have been written with the former name:—

"And I to Ford will likewise tell
How Falstaff, varlet vile,

Would have her love, his dove would prove,
And eke his bed defile."

It may be objected that, as the "Merry Wives" has little or no necessary connexion with the historical plays—as we have no certain evidence to show whether it was written before or after the two parts of Henry IV., the settlement of the question of names, if I may so express myself, in the former, is no guide whatever to the period at which the change was made in the other plays. In reply, I must confess this position is hypothetical, unless my readers agree with me in believing the "Merry Wives" to have been written after the Second Part of Henry IV., and before Henry V., a subject which it would be irrelevant to discuss in this place.

The First Part of Henry IV. was entered at Stationers' Hall, on Feb. 25th, 1597-8, under the title of, "A booke intituled the Historye of Henry the iij.th, with his battaile at Shrewsburye against Henry Hottspure of the Northe, with the conceived Mirth of Sir John

Falstaffe." Falstaff was the name, then, at least as early as the year 1597. After this period we have frequent allusions to the character. Ben. Jonson, in the epilogue to "Every Man out of his Humour," acted in 1599, thus alludes to the "thrasonical puff:"—

"Marry, I will not do as Plautus in his *Amphytrio*, for all this, 'Summi Jovis causa, plaudite,' beg a plaudite, for God's sake; but if you, out of the bounty of your good-liking, will bestow it, why you may in time make lean *Macilente* as fat as *Sir John Falstaff*."—*Gifford's Jonson*, vol. ii., p. 210.

I will give one more example of the Knight's popularity from Roger Sharpe's "More Fooles Yet," 4to. Lond. 1610:—

" *In Virosus* .

"How Falstaffe like doth sweld Virosus looke,
As though his paunch did foster every sinne;
And sweares he is injured by this booke,—
His worth is taxt, he hath abused byn :
Swell still, Virosus, burst with emulation,
I neither taxe thy vice nor reputation."

It would not be difficult to multiply similar extracts. Mr. Collier has printed a document which shows how Falstaff was probably attired for the stage at this early period, which is attested by the creditable name of Inigo Jones. A character is to be dressed "*like* a Sir John Falstaff, in a roabe of russet, quite low, with a great belley, like a swollen man, long moustacheos, the sheows shorte, and out of them great toes, like naked feete : buskins to sheaw a great swollen leg." Thus it would seem that size has always been the prevailing characteristic of Falstaff's theatrical appearance.

This consideration leads me to remark that the character of Oldcastle, as exhibited in "*The Famous Victories*," could not by itself have developed so popular and general a notion of "*hugeness*," as that suggested in the extracts I have given relative to him or Falstaff. On the whole, then, independently of the entire evidence being in its favour, I think the account given by Dr. James would be the most plausible conjecture we could form, were we without the aid of that evidence.

The only objection, as far as I can see, which can be raised against the veracity of Dr. James's account, is the slight discrepancy I have previously mentioned. My own faith is not at all shaken by this circumstance, because he was repeating from memory the doubts of another, as he had heard them in conversation, and was probably more solicitous of placing the question in a position to enable him to defend his hero Oldcastle, than of giving a correct version of what he considered an error in Shakespeare. I cannot think that he would have introduced Shakespeare in the manner in which he has, if he had not been pretty certain of the truth of the anecdote. Fastolf, too, was an Oxford man, and he resents his supposed degradation under the title of Falstaff. His successors were apparently impressed with the same notion. Warton tells us that "the magnificent Knight, Sir John Fastolf, bequeathed estates to Magdalen College, part of which were appropriated to buy liveries for some of the senior scholars; but the benefactions in time yielding no more

than a penny a week to the scholars who received the liveries, they were called, by way of contempt, *Falstaff's buckram-men*."

An anonymous and inedited poet of the early part of the seventeenth century, whose MS. works were formerly in the possession of Oldys, complains sadly of Shakespeare, for a similar reason:—

"Here to evince that scandal has been thrown
Upon a name of honour, charactred
From a wrong person, coward and buffoon;
Call in your easy faiths, from what you've read
To laugh at Falstaffe; as a humour fram'd
To grace the stage, to please the age, misnam'd.

"No longer please yourselves to injure names
Who lived to honour: if, as who dare breathe
A syllable from Harry's choice, the fames,
Conferr'd by princes, may redeem from death?
Live Fastolffe then; whose trust and courage once
Merited the first government in France."

The "De sacramentis dedicationis sermo," which Dr. James mentions, is still preserved in the archives of Magdalen College, Oxford,

with the following curious original memorandum :—

“Suo domino colendissimo magistro Wilhelmo Waynflete, sedis ecclesiæ Sancti Swythini Wyntoniensis episcopo, quæ olim ante tempus consecrationis dictæ ecclesiæ templum Dagon vocabatur tempore Paganorum gentium, et præsentatur domino præscripto episcopo de beneficio domini Johannis Fastolf militis, ob memoriam sui, quamvis modicum fuerit quantitatis, die sextodecimo mensis Decembris, Anno Christi 1473, per Willelmum Wyrcestre.”*

But I have said enough respecting Sir John Fastolf, who, brave as he probably was, has acquired only an adventitious importance, by being confused with our poet’s “coward and buffoon.” The two were confused because

* William Wyrcestre was Fastolf’s physician. In his commonplace-book, in MS. Sloan. 4, p. 78, Wyrcestre informs us that Fastolf, “obiit ex dictis passionibus [*i. e.* asmatis] infra 158 diebus a prima die inceptionis dictæ febris ethicæ, ut bene per experientiam numeram.”

few, as Fuller says in a passage I have quoted; "do heed the inconsiderable difference in spelling of their names." What reason have we for thinking that Shakespeare took more "heed" of this matter than his contemporaries, when he chose the name of Falstaff? If writers on the absurd dispute concerning the orthography of the poet's name would but remember this, how much trouble might be saved in refuting the affected innovation.

With these observations I conclude my collection of facts and arguments, all of which tend more or less to confirm the literal truth of the tradition handed down to us by Rowe. Mr. D'Israeli, in his recently published work, justly remarks, that, "though the propagators of gossip are sad blunderers, they rarely aspire to be original inventors;" and, in this instance, the course of a century has not accumulated any posthumous additions to the original fact as it really happened.

Rowe's life of our poet is valuable, inasmuch as he occasionally gives us information not to be found elsewhere, though evidently not

always in a very accurate manner. As an editor, he was below par; but it must be remembered that, after the four folios, he was the first to collect the works of Shakespeare together. "This Rowe," says the Earl of Oxford,* "a special editor, though he pretended to be a poet, yet he knew little of what he was about, for there never was a worse edition; he not only left the errors that had been in other editions, but added many more of his own, with most vile prints."

Unwearied industry has exerted itself for biographical particulars relative to Shakespeare. How little has hitherto been discovered! Yet I am not wholly without hopes, even now, of something more turning up, for many private collections still remain unsearched—and there is no telling what the archives of our ancient nobility contain. At all events, let us hope, that whoever can in any manner aid this important enquiry, will not hesitate in sending any new information forth to the world at once, for documentary evidence

* MS. Harl. 7544; a book containing some curious biographical information.

on this subject is of so high a value, that it ought not to be suffered to remain in manuscript. Under this impression, I will here contribute two *ανεκδοτα*, albeit fragments, which have hitherto escaped the researches of all the biographers of our great dramatist.

My readers will perhaps be surprised to learn that the fragments I allude to were discovered in Aubrey's manuscript collections, in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford, which have been so repeatedly referred to by the biographers and critics. It will be recollected, that Aubrey, in his life of D'Avenant, in that collection, gives us two anecdotes regarding Shakespeare. These have been frequently printed; but, during a recent visit to Oxford, I had the curiosity to inspect the original manuscript, and found that two paragraphs, *scratched through, but not with a contemporary pen*, had escaped notice. By the aid of a strong light, and a powerful magnifying glass, I was enabled to read them entirely, with the exception of a few letters. I here present them to the reader:—

1. "I have heard parson R—b— say, that

Mr. W. Shakespeare here gave him a hundred kisses."

The passage immediately preceding this, and which is not erased, is as follows:—"Mr. William Shakespeare was wont to goe into Warwickshire once a yeare, and did commonly in his journey lye at this house in Oxon, where he was exceedingly respected." The word "here," of course, in the above paragraph, refers to Oxford.

Aubrey again speaks of Shakespeare, and in the other erased passage I found the following:

2. "His mother had a very light report."

The first is a striking, but, considering the period, not at all an improbable, anecdote of the friendship which existed between Shakespeare and D'Avenant. On the second I shall make no comment. I may, however, add, that Mr. Kirtland, assistant keeper of the Ashmolean Museum, who is deeply skilled in palæography, agreed with me in my reading of the blotted passages.

On any other person but Shakespeare,

minute enquiries of this nature would be considered trifling; but so little do we know of the personal character of our national bard, that every early notice of him is worthy of preservation. His pre-eminence was not acknowledged by his contemporaries; his works fell into neglect while written memorials of him remained; and when he emerged into universal celebrity, we find nought but a few accidental notices of him preserved, and five autograph signatures!

But although, as I have just said, his pre-eminence was not acknowledged by his contemporaries, his reputation must have been very considerable, even in those days; perhaps, however, eclipsed by the fame of other dramatists. Yet it is seldom that we find so just a tribute paid to his genius, while he was yet in the land of the living, as Samuel Sheppard gives in a poem* entitled "The Fairy King,"

* MS. Rawl. Poet. 28, in the Bodleian Library; a folio volume on paper. I have never seen this MS. mentioned in print.

written in imitation of Spenser, soon after the year 1610. The author, in this poem, not only mentions Shakespeare, but marshalls the other English poets in chronological order, commencing with Chaucer and Skelton. I am tempted to give rather a long extract from this part of the work :—

“ Spencer the next, whom I doe thinke’t no shame
 To imitate, if now his worke affords
 So vast a glory ! O how faire a fame,
 Had hee not doated on exploded words,
 Had waited on him ! Let his honour’d name
 Find veneration ’bove the Earth’s great lords !
 Great Prince of Poets, thou canst never die,
 Lodg’d in thy rare immortall history !

“ Immortall Mirrour of all poesie,
 Sprit of Orpheus, bring your pretious balms !
 God of Invention, to thy memory
 Wee’l offer incense, singing hymns and psalms !
 Joy of our laurell, Jove’s deare Mercury,
 Ingyrt his grave with myrtle and with palms,
 Whose rare desert first kindled my desire,
 And gave mee confidence th’s to aspire.

“ Then Harrington, whose sweet conversion vies
 With Ariosto’s fam’d originall;
 O what a passion will his soule surprize,
 Whose mind’s not clog’d with lumpish earth,
 who shall

Peruse thy Annotations and applies
 Their severall heights as they in order fall:
 Nor, this omitted, hadst thou miss’d of fame;
 Thy Epigrams shall canonize thy name!

“ Chapman the next, who makes great Homer’s
 song,

Th’ eternall boast of the Pernassides,
 To vaile its bonnet to our English tongue;
 What can the power of wit or art expresse,
 That, without offering all that’s holy wrong,
 Wee lodg’d in his large brest, must not confesse?
 Nor can wee match his most admired play,
 Either in Sophocles or Seneca.

“ Wooton the next, whose fragments have farre
 more

Of worth then mighty volumes full compleat;
 The richest wit may borrow from his store;
 A generall scholler, flowing pithie neat;
 An able minister of state, therefore
 Quallifide by his prince for actions great;

'Tis a measuring cast which of them were
The wiser king or wiser counsellour.

“ Daniell the next, grave and sententious,
In all high knowledge excellent hee sung
The brawles 'twixt Yorke and Lancaster 'mongst
us,

With an angel-like and a golden tongue ;
Nothing in him vaine or ridiculous,
His lines like to his fancie, hie and strong ;
More haughty tragedies no age hath seene
Then his ‘ Philotas,’ or ‘ Ægyptian Queene.’

“ King James the next, a prince without compare,
During whose reigne the heavens were pleas'd
to smile ;

Hee hated swords and loath'd the name of warre,
And yet all nations feard this Borean ile :
His works, his learning, and great parts declare,
Hee wrot a most succinct elaborate stile ;
His converse with the Nine, let that rare worke
Declare, where Don John once more beats the
Turke.

“ Bacon the next. Cease, Greece, to boast the parts
Of Plato or great Aristotle ! Wee,

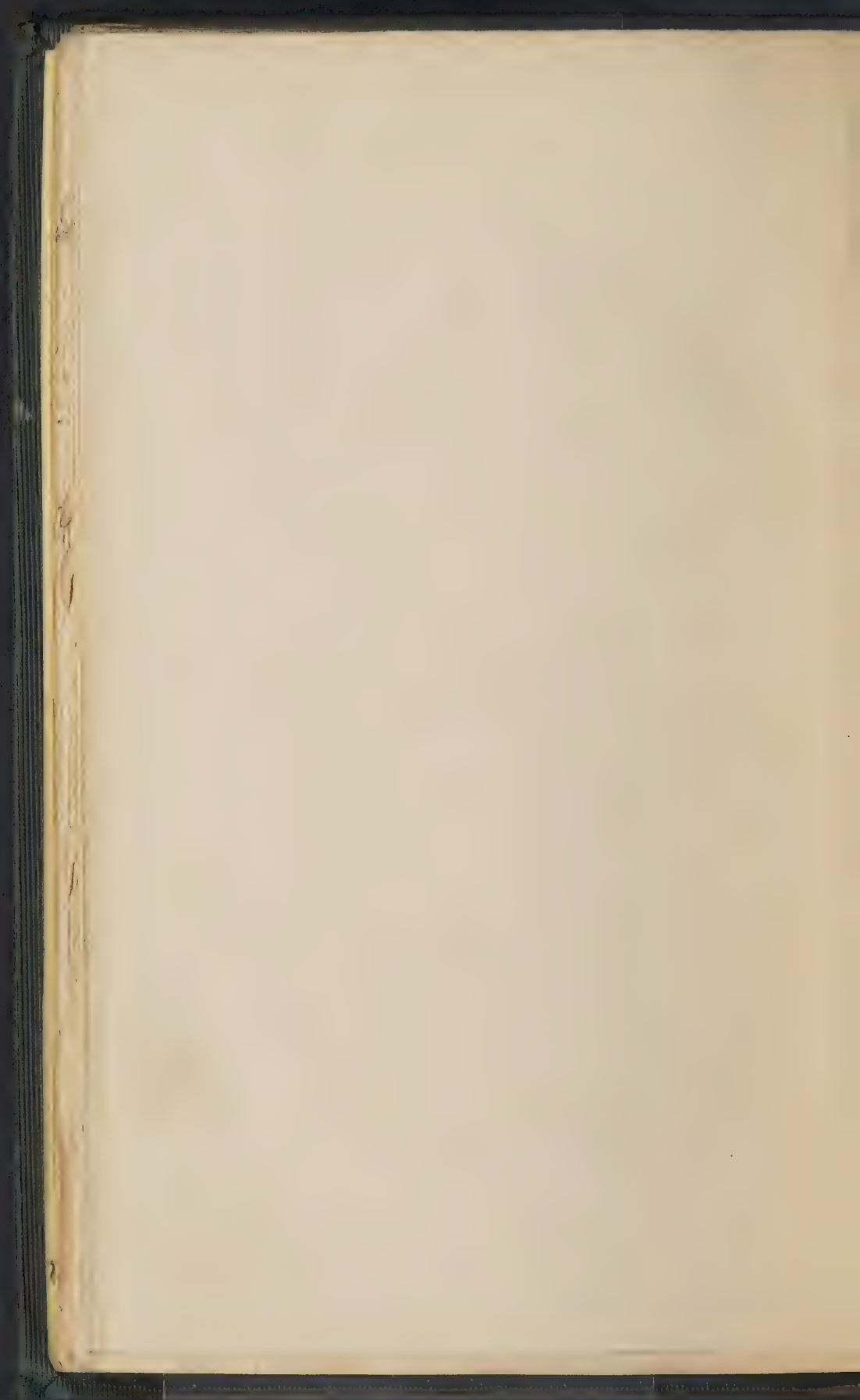
In this rare man, have all their radiant arts,
 Who was a walking, living librarie ;
 Wonder of men, thy high, thy vast deserts
 Deserve a Plutarch's pen ! By thee wee vie
 And vanquish all the auncients ; thou alone
 Hast rais'd our tongue to full perfection.

“Shakespeare the next ; who wrot so much, so
 well,
 That, when I view his bulke, I stand amaz'd ;
 A genius so inexhaustible,
 That hath such tall and numerous trophies
 rais'd,
 Let him bee thought a block, an infidell,
 Shall dare to skreene the lustre of his praise :
 Whose works shall find their due, a deathlesse
 date,
 Scorning the teeth of time or force of fate !”

Now “my charms are all o'erthrown.” I
 have brought together what I have been able
 to collect on a few points in Shakespeare's
 literary history—points undoubtedly of inter-
 est and curiosity ; and if I have succeeded in
 setting at rest any disputed question, or made
 an approach to it on either side, I shall not

consider my labour entirely thrown away. A time may come when the very names of all our Shakespearian editors and commentators shall be forgotten; but will the "Apalachian mountains, the banks of the Ohio, and the plains of Sciota," ever resound with the accents of our great dramatist? The beneficial effects of their researches may then remain, perhaps when the memory of that language which styled the genius of England a "barbarian," shall have perished. But I will not dive further into futurity.

THE END.



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AN INTRODUCTION
TO SHAKESPEARE'S
MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

[*From the "Times," June 12th, 1841*].

"We seem to be returning to the days of Malone, and Steevens, and Chalmers, and the Irelands, and Hardinge, and Boaden, when every month and almost every week produced some new volume or tract, the subject of which was Shakespeare or his writings. Whether this second brood will produce anything that can entitle them to be placed in the same rank with the commentators and critics of the last century, remains still to be seen. We suspect that most that was efficient for the illustration of the life, or of the writings, was done by them. Yet something, no doubt, remains to reward diligence and sagacity, both of which are wanted; and we would be far from discouraging any well-intended attempt at the illustration of writings on which England founds no small portion of its national glory. Only let not the modern commentator first steal from his pre-

decessors everything which they have that is valuable, either in quotation or remark, and then abuse them in good set terms. This is the way with two or three of the later brood of commentators and editors; but it is far from being the case with Mr. Halliwell, who proceeds upon the principle, which is at least an honest one, of introducing as little as may be of what is to be found in the *variorum* editions, or in the pages of preceding writers.

“But he who proceeds upon this principle must be content to be told that there is much omitted which readers have some right to expect, and that if a whole volume, though it may be of thin and elegant shape like this, is to be devoted to the illustration of a single play, there must be something of surplusage—something which the fastidious reader will think is beyond the just line of a commentator’s duty. For, whatever opinion may be formed of the taste and judgment of the old critics, the praise of laboriousness can hardly be denied to them; and assuredly, with hardly an exception, the best of what is to be done for the efficient illustration of these writings, is already done in the notes and prologomena of the established editions.

“This play in particular has been well illustrated by them, though we still think that more is to be done. It appears to us to be more full of allusion to the authors and events of the time than has been supposed, and that there is particular satire as well as general satire of the minor theatricals of the age of Shakespeare, in all that we find of the efforts in

this way of the hard-handed men of Athens. This is at least a fair subject for further research, and we wish Mr. Halliwell had been fortunate enough to have detected the particular allusions. He is a great grubber in libraries, printed and manuscript; and the world has already begun to expect something valuable from him, not in this line only, but in every line of curious research; nor will it, we think, in the end be disappointed. The long-disputed question on the 'learning late deceased in beggary' he leaves still as much undetermined as it was left by his predecessors; and as to the famous passage of the 'Mermaid on the dolphin's back,' he has not the slightest notice of it, deeming it, we presume, one of those which others before him had sufficiently discussed; and, having nothing to add of his own, he leaves it on the honest principle of saying nothing where he had nothing to say.

"Yet those who are impressed with the singular beauty of the passage (and who are not?), would have been glad to have received at his hands some contribution, however slight; or, at least, to have seen the result of his own consideration of the conflicting argument of Warburton and Ritson, in the first instance, and of the other commentators, not forgetting Mr. Boaden, who has written ingeniously and learnedly on the passage. It seems to be the fashion of the time to decry the old commentators, but we would wish those who affect to despise the hands which had administered to their own wants and deficiencies, to recur to the notes on this passage,

as showing that, whether they are right, or whether they are wrong (and they are not all right), there is some very elegant entertainment to be gained from the writings of the commentators.

“ Mr. Halliwell, at pp. 3 and 4, has some original remarks on the want of consistency, in respect of time, in this drama. We do not mean anachronisms, for it is manifest that Shakespeare gave, and did it advisedly, the manners of his own times to times long preceding, but inconsistently in the time of one part of the action with the time of another. These remarks are valuable, as is everything which throws any new light on the way in which this free spirit proceeded in the production of his immortal works, or the principles on which the modern critic ought to proceed in his judgment of them, or in his efforts at restoration from the debased state in which it must be admitted that they have been delivered down to us by the printers of the time.

“ The opinion of the critics who have written on the question of the chronological order, that the *Midsummer Night's Dream* is referred to a period when the cold summer of 1594 was fresh in everybody's recollection, is very happily illustrated by Mr. Halliwell, by a passage which he found in one of Forman's MSS., in the Ashmolean Library, at Oxford.

“ The play being, as it were, founded on the fairy mythology of the time, it might seem that the whole of that subject might be appropriately introduced and discussed in a body of annotation on this play, or in

an introduction to it ; but then, as the subjects used in a similar manner by Shakespeare are almost without number, the subjects are almost numberless that might thus be introduced into any work on Shakespeare and his writings. Something must, undoubtedly, be said respecting the Fairies and Robin Goodfellow, and the rest ; but when the genius of Shakespeare was justified by showing that he had adhered to the popular notions respecting them, we think that all was done that was within the limits of just criticism, and that the further prosecution of the subject, which is, indeed, one of great beauty and interest, should be reserved for a work expressly on the popular superstitions of England. Mr. Halliwell has, however, in this part of the work, the merit of bringing forward passages from old writers, which bear upon the subject, that had not previously been observed, or, at least, were not to be found in the ordinary books on this subject. We rejoice to see Mr. Collier's black-letter ballad, entitled 'The Merry Puck, or Robin Goodfellow,' made easily accessible in this work to those who take an interest in this subject. It fills eight pages of Mr. Halliwell's volume, and will bear to be read even after 'The Nymphidia.'

"The illustrations of the popular notion of the 'Man in the Moon,' which prevails all over Europe, are good in themselves ; but if the mere allusion of Shakespeare to such a notion is to be made a reason for introducing, in a book of comment upon him, all the learning that can be anywhere collected about it,

we fear that Shakespeare himself is in danger of being buried beneath this mass of his annotation.

“Mr. Halliwell gives an account of the various attempts which have been made to revive this play as an acting drama. Soon after the Restoration, it was revived. ‘September 29, 1662. To the King’s Theatre, where we saw *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, which I had never seen before, nor shall ever again, for it is the most insipid, ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life.’ This is from ‘Pepys’s Diary.’ We do not wonder that it was not to Pepys’s taste, for he was a coarse man; but we also think that it pleases better in the closet than on the stage, though we half recall the opinion when we recollect how effectively it has been brought out at Covent-garden Theatre in the present season. Yet there, though admirably acted, it has owed much to the pardonable artifice of introducing recitatives in the long passages, which, though of pre-eminent poetical beauty, would fall flat on the ear when listened to in a crowded theatre. They are for the sweeter moments of private study.

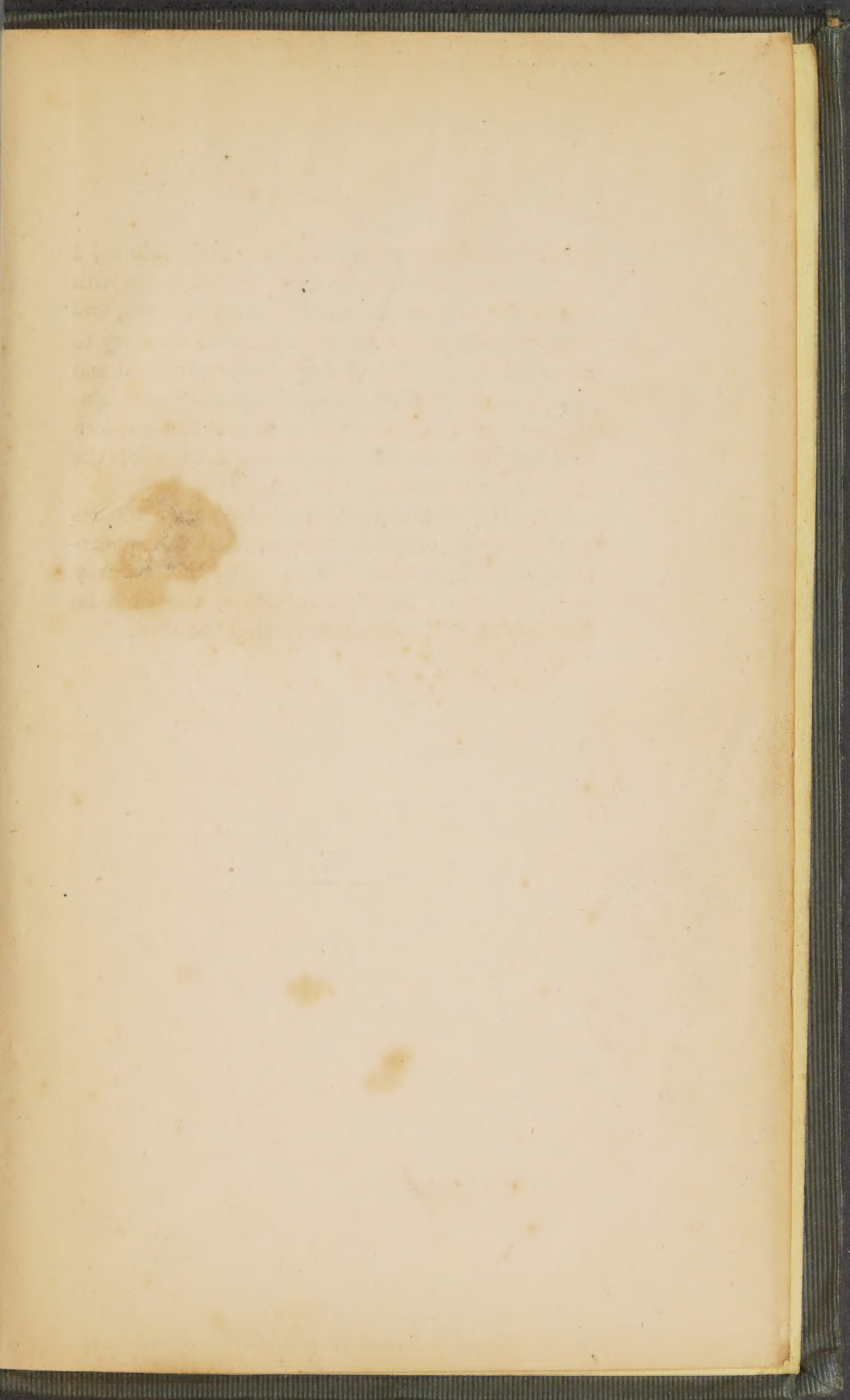
“In the ninth chapter, Mr. Halliwell enters on the idle question of the orthography of the name, which he writes *Shakespeare*. This is accordant with the printed orthography of Shakespeare himself and his friends. What better authority, when it had received also the sanction of the great body of English authors down to a recent period? But because in the manuscript of the time the name is found written, and by the poet himself, *Shakspere*,

this, which Mr. D'Israeli calls the 'curt shock' form, must be adopted. But anybody acquainted with the manuscript of the age of Shakespeare knows that in his time the utmost license was used in respect of proper names ; and this new orthography is only one out of twenty-seven forms, in which we have heard that the name may be found in the writings of the age of Shakespeare, in the county to which he belonged. As to the poet himself, the only person of his family of any account, we believe, that as he printed it *Shakespeare*, so is it uniformly printed by his contemporaries, except that it sometimes wants the final *e*. It was Bell and Pinkerton, two critics of the lower form, who first attempted to supersede the old form by *Shakspere* ; and we remember then the number of persons was not small who pronounced the name accordingly—a heresy still more dangerous, as it destroys some good poetry which is consecrated to his memory.

“ We conclude with quoting from an *envoy* to his little volume, in which the author comes forward in his own person :—‘ If there be any of my readers who agree with me in not rejecting any illustrations of writings so valuable as these, they may perhaps consider the materials here brought together worthy their consideration ; and it will depend upon their verdict, given on the present occasion, whether I shall be induced to offer to their notice similar annotations on some of the other plays. This, however, I may be allowed to say, without fear of being accused of egotism, that, whatever may be the opinion of the

public respecting the merits of my little volume, I have always endeavoured to present the reader with new facts, rather than adaptations of old ones, and have carefully avoided a system, now I am sorry to say much in practice, of appropriating the best and attacking the weakest points of the older commentators, who have, despite of the outcries of some modern critics against their errors, done so much towards the right understanding of their author.'

"Mr. Halliwell is right, and as long as he adheres to this honest principle, we shall hail the appearance of his future lucubrations with the certainty that our knowledge of Shakespeare, and what he hath left us, will not remain precisely as it was."



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